—liquefied natural gas (LNG) in power generation;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof stating the benefits likely to be accrued in power sector as a result thereof; and

(c) whether Government have undertaken any detailed feasibility study to evolve a perspective plan for the use of LNG; if so, what are the details thereof and the cost at which power would be available to the industry with the use of LNG?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POWER IN THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (SHRI KALPNATH RAI): (a) The Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP) had suggested a policy orientation towards substitution of coal by a greater use of hylrocarbons as the primary energy source for power generation.

(b) According to the BICP, the cost of production and transportation of domestic coal has been rapidly increasing and its quality has been deteriorating. The BICP study, therefore, concludes that a shift to hydrocarbons will not only reduce costs, but would also require much less scarce capital resources in the coming plans for creating additional capacities in the power and transportation sectors. The Planning Commission has initiated a study on long-term energy modelling and the Government would take a view in the matter after the result of the Planning Commission's study is available.

(c) The Planning Commission has set up an Advisory Group on Perspective Plan for Natural Gas to look into the various aspects of natural ga utilisation and production.

Fixing price of Natural gas

3683. SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Gujarat Government has requested the Central Government for fixing the price of natural gas on the basis of coal equivalence at pithead;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Gujarat is in a disadvantageous position because of its being far from coal mines; and

(c) what is the reaction of the Central Government to the request of the State Government regarding fixing the price of natural gas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI BRAHM DUTT): (a) and (b) The Government of Gujarat have expressed their concern about coal equivalence determined after taking into account freight charges for transporting coal from long distance.

(c) The present price of natural gas is not fixed on the basis of coal equivalence as such.

Coal price equalisation scheme

3684. SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have received proposals from various sources regarding equalisation of coal prices throughout India; if so, what is the response of Government thereto;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the prices of steel and gas are uniform throughout India and that requests have been made by various coal consuming sectors for uniform pricing of coal in all parts of the country; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POWER IN THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY (SHRI KALPNATH RAI): (a) to (d) Proposals have been received in the past from various quarters for the introduction of freight equalisation scheme in respect of coal. It

is true that the pithead price which is realised by the coal company forms a relatively smaller part of cost of coal to the consumer in non coal producing States. Apart from pithead price other elements in the cost of coal are royalty and taxes levied by State Governments and freight. While it is a fact that there is some measure of equalisation in the prices of Steel and Gas to the consumers in different parts of the country, similar arrangements in coal are not practical for the following reasons:—

(i) Coal is a bulk commodity of low value and therefore, freight is a major element in its cost which is not the case in respect of Steel and Gas.

(ii) Coal is produced in a large number of locations in different regions and the operation of freight equalisation scheme with so many producing centres and for a quantity of the order of around 150 to 200 million tonnes would pose insuperable difficulties.

(iii) A reight equalisation scheme in coal would, instead of solving the problem only transfer the disadvantage now experienced by consumer in non-coal producing States to consumer who are located near the coalfields.

Hunger strike by cafeteria workers of Visakhapatnam unit of HPCL

3685. SHRI K. G. MAHESWARAPPA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the workers employed in the cafeteria of the Visakhapatnam unit of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited are on hunger strike since 25th July, 1988;

(b) if so, what are the grievances of these workers;

(c) whether 60 workmen have been suspended by the management while their dispute was being conciliated upon by the Assistant Labour Commissioner (Central);

(d) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(e) whether Government propose to direct the HPCL to settle the demands of these workers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI BRAHM DUTT): (a) and (b) The workmen engaged in the night shift of the cafeteria at HPCL's Visakhapatnam refinery are engaged by a contractor and not by HPCL. This contract labour has resorted to relay hunger strike from July 25, 1988. The main grievances of the workers are enhancement of wages and allowances and permanent employment in the HPCL;

(c) and (d) Joint meetings had been held by the Assistant Labour Commissioner between the contractor and representatives of the workers. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited had attended as an observer only. The cafeteria contractor requested the management of HPCL to terminate the contract in view of the indiscipline and unruly attitude of the contract labour. The Corporation advised him to continue until alternative arrangements could be made. After making alternative arrangements, the contract was terminated on July 9, 1988. The contractor in turn terminated the services of his employees under clause 14(1) of sub-rule 25 of the Andhra Pradesh Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Rules, 1971.

(e) No, Sir. There is no such proposal under consideration of Government.

Comparative prices of Naphtha

3686. DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the details of prices of naphtha from 1977 to 1988 year-wise;

(b) what are the corresponding prices in the international market; and

(c) whether there are any proposals to reduce the gap in naphtha prices in relation to international and indigenous price?